

PROGRESS EVALUATION OF THE MENENGAGE ALLIANCE FOR THE PERIOD 2017 - 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In mid 2020, Singizi Consulting Africa conducted an external evaluation of the MenEngage Alliance for the period 2017 – 2020. We focused on the **progress** made by Alliance against the key imperatives emerging from the last evaluation, with a view to **informing** the strategic priorities for the next phase of the Alliance’s work. In doing this, we **assessed the relevance, value add and results** of the work of MenEngage Alliance, both for the network’s membership base and for the broader field of engaging men and boys for gender justice, and **highlighted insights** for the development of the next (2021-2024) strategic plan.

The evaluation took place during the global pandemic, and, at the time of finalizing this report, we are seeing the beginning of the resultant, and widening, economic, financial, social and political crisis. Even prior to the pandemic, the global backlash against feminism and against human rights, had been given expression in increased levels of violence meted out against communities because of race, gender, sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, religious identities as well as against indigenous people and other marginalized communities (such as refugees). This is expected to worsen as the impact of the pandemic bites, and many respondents recognized this, speaking about the challenges of working in environments where there is so little stability and *“where it is difficult for people to live normally and peacefully.”*

The context of the pandemic impacted on the way in which this evaluation was undertaken (entirely on-line) and likely impacted on responses provided to questions about change: many activists spoke of how challenging this period has been and the extent of the loss of rights experienced. In several countries, respondents raised specific concerns about increased levels of gender-based violence. Members strongly asserted that this environment makes the work of the Alliance more critical than ever suggesting that, *“MenEngage networks/members can function as a ‘seawall’, preventing men and boys from ‘falling to the other side’ and providing an alternative male voice and image that can block the potential hegemony of ‘men’s rights’ men”*. This context will also influence the work of the Alliance over the next period, and the kinds of priorities on which the Alliance will need to focus.

Methodology

The evaluation primarily used an **Outcomes Harvesting approach**, a methodology that “collects evidence of what has changed and then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention contributed to these changes.”¹ We began with an extensive review of internal documents, reports and resources provided by the Alliance, coupled with initial interviews and focus groups with the regional and global structures of the Alliance, which allowed us to ‘harvest’ outcomes (to collect evidence of what has changed). These harvested outcomes, coupled with the Theory of Change and the Key Evaluation Questions from the Terms of Reference (ToRs), were then used to develop a series of surveys administered to member of the Alliance at national, regional and global levels, to collect their input and to provide a platform for a diversity of voices. This included collecting stories of change as well as a ‘story completion’ activity (a feminist research methodology, which allows for the accessing and investigation of social discourses). The outcomes were then

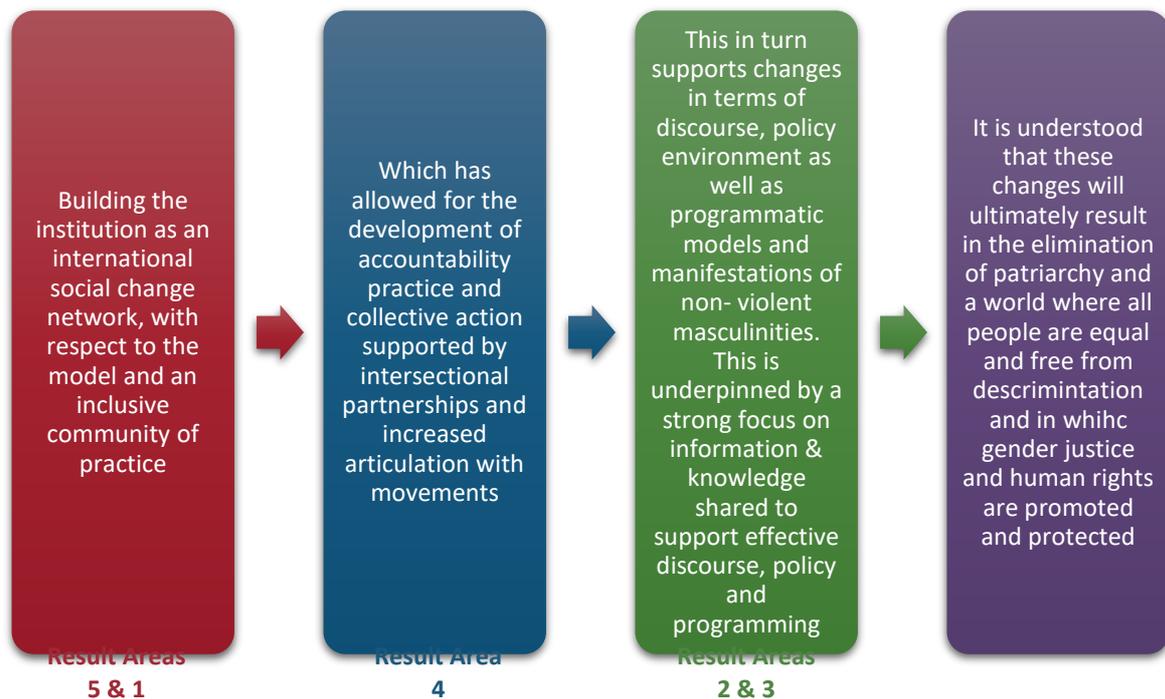
¹ Wilson-Grau, R. *Outcome Harvesting*. Better Evaluation. 2015. Retrieved from http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting

further refined through interviews and the administration of validation templates with both internal and external role players. The initial findings of this evaluation were also shared in a workshop organized by the Global Secretariat, which deepened and enriched the report.

Key Findings: Achievements

The first section of this summary focuses on the key findings of the evaluation in terms of the achievements and progress of the Alliance over the period under review. We highlight emerging issues and recommendations going forward.

The findings of the evaluation are organized against MenEngage Alliance’s Theory of Change and consider both the Results Framework and the key evaluation questions. Specifically, the harvested outcomes show progress and change in:



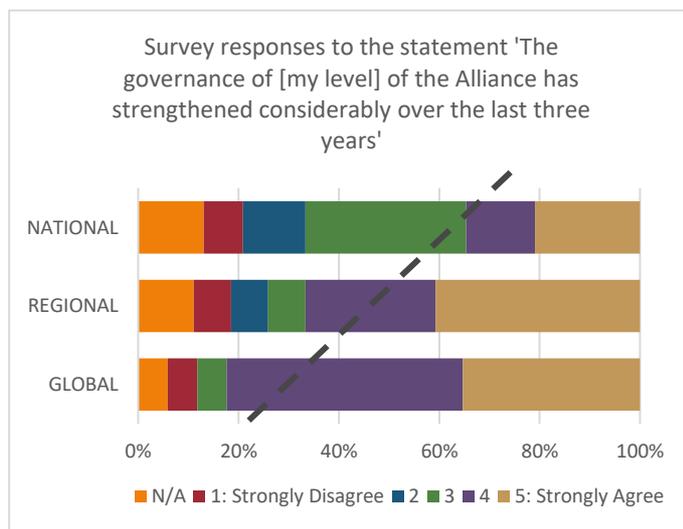
Institutional strengthening of the Network



Singizi has found that, in line with the recommendations of the previous evaluation, there has been a strong focus on institution building during the period under review. The **organization’s internal infrastructure** has been effectively established, including legal status, policies and procedures (focusing on those that address sexual harassment and misconduct). There is a general view from interviewees that this infrastructural strengthening has led to an **improvement in governance**, specifically at Global and Regional level, and then to a lesser extent at national level, and evidence from the surveys supports this, as shown to the right. Respondents also recognize the level of diversity within the Global Secretariat, which allows regions to feel connected to the global structures. In general, there is an increased sense of **ownership and commitment** at all levels of the Alliance. This came through in the interviews and was probed in the surveys, where it was found that the sense of ownership and commitment is very strong at a global level: just over 80% of global respondents indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that members had a strong sense of ownership of and commitment to the work at a global level. A lower percentage of respondents at a national and regional level selected this option, but both were over 50%: 54% of respondents at a national level and 52% of respondents at a regional level selected these options.

This improvement in governance at a regional level can largely be attributed to the **network-building support** that has been provided to regional networks by the Global Alliance: regional network respondents indicated that they acknowledge and appreciate the support provided. There is clear evidence of a **shared understanding of the strategic plan** and of the theory of change at all three levels of the Network, and of **increased capacity to address priorities** by the structures and members of the Alliance at all levels:

“We are much more allied and strengthened in networking, and that means that the processes of dissemination and support for work in all parts of the country, can reach all people, in work with men, empowerment of women and children’s rights and girls”. The **funding** that was allocated to regions has been very valuable: respondents spoke to the importance of the sub-grants and the support of regional leadership to growing the work of the national networks and in assisting members to access resources. here is a need to consider how this can be sustained and leveraged across the Alliance. There is also strong evidence that **knowledge products have been developed and shared**, contributing to improved and more cohesive practice. Similarly,



respondents recognize and appreciate the emphasis on **improving communication**, and regional respondents indicated particularly that they thought that the Global Secretariat communicates effectively. Respondents at all three levels indicated that they thought that their secretariats were using better and more efficient communication tools.

The focus of the strengthening of the network has contributed to the **growth and inclusiveness** of the network, in terms of both new members and countries and of the increased voice of young people, women and individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions. The strengthened networks have also contributed to an **increased level of democratization**, in terms of decision making, transparency and opportunities for new leadership.

Ultimately, the evaluation has produced strong evidence that significant work has been done to establish *a strong, inclusive, democratic and sustainable MenEngage Alliance model (Result Area 5)*, which is leading to an organization that is *increasingly capable, inclusive, connected, mobilized [and able to amplify] local, country and regional work on engaging men and boys in gender transformative approaches (Result Area 1)*.

Collective actions and intersectional partnerships



Building off this strong institutional base, the evaluation surfaced strong evidence of *accountable practices and partnerships among MenEngage Alliance members and SRHR, women's rights and gender justice movements, based on solidarity, equality, justice and feminist principles (Result Area 4)*. In particular, we found that there is a **growing understanding** of the values and principles of the Alliance, as given expression in the **Accountability Standards**, amongst members and partners. In the discourse analysis, that we undertook of the responses to the story stems: These responses highlight the ways in which members have grappled with their own knowledge and attitudes as part of working in ways that are consistent with the Accountability

Standards. These changes have made an important contribution to consolidating the strength of the network, supporting shifts in understanding and attitudes relating to **power and privilege in a manner that increasingly breaks down hierarchies within the Alliance**. and to the way in which partnerships and engagements with women's organizations as well as with feminist and social justice organizations/movements have been established. Respondents articulated an appreciation for the role of the network in creating a space with shared values and enabling collective action whilst ensuring that members continue to have autonomy: "*Because of the way we operate we built a culture and a connection as members that provides support and energy. This is really significant because we are working in a hostile environment – to be able to lean into others who are like-minded and share values*". "

In particular, multiple **respondents from women's organizations spoke to their increased willingness to work with MenEngage** because of this commitment to accountability. This was particularly true at a global level and to a large extent at a regional level. These partnerships have been instrumental in the Alliance's ability to take forward advocacy and other actions: an external respondent, who was asked about the extent to which they agreed that the harvested outcome pertaining to strengthened partnerships leading to collective agreement on ways to take action has been achieved, confirmed that they thought this outcome had indeed been achieved, and stated that this achievement is seen as critical as work on men's engagement in SRHR needs to be in support of women's rights and autonomy to control their sexuality and fertility: *"while men need to be engaged, it cannot be to take over or make decisions about or at the expense of women's right to control their bodies, without which SRHR cannot be achieved"*

The extent to which MenEngage is part of a **movement** or collaborating with different movements in an ad-hoc manner was evidenced throughout the evaluation. There was evidence in this evaluation that the ways in which MenEngage has engaged with accountability has enabled the networks to contribute to wider social and gender justice movements. There is also an increasing awareness of intersectionality, and one Global respondent noted that the Alliance is able to speak out about *"climate change and our responsibility as MenEngage activists to speak up and do something about it. Now we are recognizing more the specific struggles of trans and non-binary people. Now we are talking more about accountability to the feminist movements and the LGBTQI movements as a cross cutting theme in all we do. And during these last few months after the murder of G Floyd and the protests, now we are talking more about racism and anti-blackness. In sum, it's an increase in political awareness."*

In Africa there was an Accountability Workshop which explored the concerns about engaging men and boys that were being highlighted by feminists in the region. This led to several important agreements being reached about ways to enhance accountability. Further MenEngage organized and co-hosted a range of public events, which provided opportunities for members and partners to dig deeper into the challenges and responsibilities that leaders in this field carry. These public spaces have provided space for many stakeholders to raise their concerns and, equally importantly, to make proposals on what needs to change.

Shifting discourse, policies and models



The results in this evaluation suggest that, whilst the focus of the Alliance over this phase has been on the development of the structure and accountability practices, this work has yielded real change with respect to shifting discourse and policies on women and gender equality. This is based on the considerable evidence that the Alliance is working on its **advocacy strategy in a more coordinated manner**, including through the Advocacy Working Group (AWG), and has contributed to knowledge on transforming patriarchal masculinities and engaging men and boys gender justice. There is also evidence of the Alliance working to elevate the voice and experience of activists to the relevant forums.

This work is **increasingly recognized** outside of the Alliance, and we found evidence that members are ever more being invited to join policy processes, to participate in a wide range of forums at various levels, and that the input which members provide in these processes and forums is valued.

Ultimately, we saw that the work of the Alliance in these areas is contributing to the establishment of *an enabling policy environment for gender transformative approaches with men and boys to advance women’s rights and gender justice, SRHR for all, GBV prevention, redistribution of unpaid care, peace and security (Result Area 2)*: there is clear evidence that the Alliance has contributed to shifting **discourse and policies** that support the inclusion of meaningful language to engage men and boys in ways that address gender justice. One respondent, speaking about the activities of the network in Southern Africa, indicated that the network has been able to mobilize and lobby for more commitment to *“gender equality by having governments ... implement gender equality protocols and engage in gender transformative policy development.”* Another respondent, talking about Latin America, indicated that the network has had growing influence on the governments in the region, which are becoming more open to the MenEngage agenda, and provided as an example the changes made by a local government in Costa Rica, which *“made a call to hire a social organization to work on masculinities and in it required that the organization abide by the MenEngage Code of Ethics and apply to join the national MenEngage network”*.

The ‘heatmap’ diagram below, reflecting survey responses, shows that respondents at all three levels indicate that the influence on policy frameworks has been highest at a global level. Global and regional respondents gave a slightly higher average score to national influence than they did to regional influence; these scores were also higher than national respondents gave to this statement.

Analysis of average responses to statements on influencing policy frameworks (Taken from the surveys, 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree)	GLOBAL RESPONSES	REGIONAL RESPONSES	NATIONAL RESPONSES
The Alliance has been able to effectively contribute to and influence global policy frameworks on women’s rights and gender equality	4.1	4.0	3.7
The Regional Networks have generally been able to effectively contribute to and influence regional policy frameworks on women’s rights and gender equality	3.3	3.5	3.3
The National/Sub-regional Networks have generally been able to effectively contribute to and influence country policy frameworks on women’s rights and gender equality	3.4	3.6	3.3

Parallel to the work on influencing policy frameworks has been a focus on **sharing evidence-based resources to support effective** programming, and to enhance the efficacy of programs. Again, there is substantial evidence that *Programs, campaigns, advocacy efforts and organizations in the gender equality and human rights field are informed and strengthened by the information and knowledge produced by MenEngage Alliance and members on gender transformative, intersectional feminist and rights-based approaches to men and masculinities in addressing SRHR ... (Result Area 3)* The Alliance has shared learning about programming, which has contributed to the strengthening of the capacity of members in terms of both programme design and implementation, resulting in more effective programming. Respondents in the survey were asked to rate the degree to which they thought that their strategy had addressed a number of priority issues over the past three years: an analysis of the perception of members about the ways in which these issues have been prioritized offered the following picture: at a global level respondents indicated there had been a strong focus on promoting SRHR, followed by advocacy to end violence and discrimination against women and girls, and then increased responsibility and uptake of unpaid care by men and boys and reducing homophobia/transphobia. This can be compared with the issues tackled at a regional level where it was found that ending violence and discrimination against women and girls was the key issue, followed by promoting SRHR and increasing men's and boy's active non-violent attitudes, roles and responsibilities to prevent violence, war, crises and armed conflict. This was similar at a national level although here the third largest area was that of increasing support amongst men and boys for women and girl's equal participation and leadership in political, economic and public life. Respondents provided examples of how these changes in discourse, policy and programs have resulted in a shift towards the elimination of patriarchy and towards gender justice.

Emerging issues and recommendations to address in the next period

Strengthening governance at a national level

This report has highlighted the extent to which governance arrangements, at all levels, have been strengthened during the period under review. However, we found that there is a need to ensure that there is a sustained effort **to support country networks to strengthen their governance structures**, ensure that they are not reliant on one organization (and that larger organizations create spaces for smaller less resourced organizations) and enhance their capacity to develop clear action plans. In this regard it is noted that the support provided by the regional structure varies across regions: less than 50% of the national respondents in Africa, Caribbean North America and South Asia agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the regional leadership has strengthened and that it is able to provide better support to the country networks. This suggests a need to support regions so that they can more effectively support and strengthen governance and operation of country networks.

Ensuring that the Network model adopts a horizontal approach to leadership and decision-making

There is an on-going imperative to challenge patriarchal models of leadership (which is still evidenced in a limited number of cases within the regions and/or countries) and make a conscious effort to ensure that **leadership is more fluid** (that is that organizations/individuals take on different roles and that there are mechanisms to ensure that leadership changes); that a **horizontal approach to decision making** is implemented; and that a more equitable measure of **determining who participates** in regional and global events (to ensure that this is not limited to only a few people from a region) are systematically applied. This encourages an approach to leadership that is **grounded in the Accountability Standards**. This form of leadership should also ensure that there are **spaces created within the network to address any concerns**, related to sexual harassment and/or other forms of abuse of power, should these emerge. This requires an **increased awareness of the**

Code of Ethics (arising from the Accountability Standards) and **ways to ensure an adherence** to these standards.

Strengthening communication

Whilst respondents at all levels suggest that there are excellent communication tools, there is a need for a **stronger focus on internal communication**. In this regard several considerations are highlighted: there is a need to consider how the global secretariat communicates with members at a national level. That is, whether this communication should only take place through the regional networks or, in some cases, directly? The choices that are made in this regard must both strengthen the relationships between regional and national and ensure that there is effective communication with national members. These arrangements need to address the concerns highlighted in the evaluation about **communication needing to be inclusive** in terms of language (French/Spanish) as well as reflecting a balance between the more ‘academic’ articulation of the role of men and boys in moving towards gender equality versus the language and approaches relied upon in community-based activities. The need for improved communication also extends to an increased focus on communicating key developments within the network (such as the allocation of sub-grants) as well as, critically, the need to support an increased sharing of educational resources at a national level (noting just under 40% of respondents at a national level indicate that they agree/strongly agree that they access these resources).

Accountability: partnerships and movement building

This evaluation has illustrated the **importance of the increased understanding of accountability**, for personal change as well as for strengthening and growing the network. The increased understanding and commitment to the Accountability Standards have also allowed the network to build more inclusive and quality partnerships with women’s organizations, social justice organizations and to a slightly lesser extent with LGBTIQ+ organizations (in part explained by the legal challenges in many countries in the network) and has ensured a stronger youth voice. However, some respondents suggest that there is still a need for **on-going work to build awareness** of the Standards at national level (less than half of all national respondents state that the regional network has created awareness and supported efforts to strengthen accountability). There also appears to be some unevenness across regions and countries about the level of inclusivity. There is a need to encourage conversations within the network about how to **sustain efforts to be inclusive** and to undertake this in a manner that continues to **value diversity**, ensure the full participation of members and continue to focus on drawing in men and boys. Further, there is a need to ensure that inclusivity reflects the national and regional imperatives giving concrete expression to the commitment to work in an intersectional way.

The other dimension of accountability relates to the need for an on-going conversation and awareness about **when the network should ‘show up and not take space’ and when it should play a more assertive role**: that is, when should MenEngage support, and primarily observe and listen, and ensure that women’s organizations (and LGBTIQ+ organizations) within the feminist movement lead. And when should MenEngage play a more proactive role, so that it sustains its own ‘niche’ and ensures that there are spaces created that engage men and boys for gender justice. This within the context of the imperative to collectively ‘advocate, for feminist-informed, gender transformative, human rights-based language & approaches to engaging men & boys & transforming masculinities’.

This need to **balance visibility with an awareness around creating space** also informs the approach the network takes in terms of when the network takes action as the network or when, instead, members take the lead. MenEngage, as a network, is defined by its shared sense of purpose that drives collective actions for gender justice. This means that it goes **beyond a community of practice**, where it simply creates spaces for the sharing of learning (which is a critical component of building

the network as a horizontal structure), and, **through joint actions to realize change** (advocacy and programs) and **increase the impact of the activities of each individual member**. This shared purpose and commitment to action does not negate the value of members individually taking forward actions, perhaps utilizing learning through the network and/or MenEngage resources. However, we are suggesting that there should be an **on-going conversation** about when actions would have a greater impact if done as the collective and under the auspices of the MenEngage Network and when it may be preferable for actions to be undertaken by individual organizations (either with or without reference to their membership of the network).

Further, there is a need for more attention to be placed on the way in which MenEngage **interacts with movements**. There are still questions, emerging from this evaluation, about the extent to which the Alliance seeks to systemically contribute to the building of movements or, as is currently the case, participates in ad-hoc activities with movements. Our view is that, in order to contribute to change in an intersectional manner, there is a need to **be more purposeful and consistent** about the ways in which the network contributes to movement building.

Maintaining a balance: leveraging funding to support gender justice work more broadly

The evaluation has highlighted that respondents **value the funding** that they have received and can explain how this has assisted to strengthen the network at all levels. There is also evidence that the network has **encouraged members to adopt a collaborative approach to fundraising**. An analysis of the responses to the survey found that just over 30% of national respondents indicated that the sub-grant has assisted the regional network (working with the national networks) to leverage additional resources for their work at a national level. Respondents from all regions/countries hope that the sub-grant process continues, and some respondents requested that the funding reach countries and/or members that may not have directly benefitted from the sub-grant in the past.

These findings do not allow for a simplistic response: it almost goes without saying that there is a need to ensure that the **process of allocating funding is clearly and transparently communicated**, and that it is allocated specifically to **enable the activities of members** (with a bias towards support for women's organizations as well as organizations that may struggle to access funding, such as small organizations). However, there is a need to ensure that the network, rather than only fundraising for itself, also **plays a facilitative role** so that increased funding for the network as a whole translates into benefits for members and partners. Further, there is a need for the Alliance to consider how to manage its reliance on external donors through exploring what is possible to ask of its members in terms of in-kind contributions.

Learning, monitoring and evaluation: the value of the Theory of Change approach

The final set of recommendations relate to the learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME) process. Throughout this evaluation, **respondents expressed an appreciation for the evaluation and the extent to which it was implemented using a participatory design**. Respondents suggested that it is important that time is created to listen to the **perspectives of members and partners** regarding the work of the Alliance. There was a strong view that more regular evaluative activities would be advantageous, and that there is a need to find different ways of sharing this learning and documenting experiences such that members across the Alliance can understand the types of achievements being realized and, critically, the factors that enabled these changes.

Going forward we would recommend the following to ensure that the evaluative questions are addressed in a systemic way and that this contributes to on-going and collective learning:

- There is a **systematic focus on enabling a shared understanding, amongst members and partners, of the MenEngage Alliance's Theory of Change**. The ToC should be communicated in a

way that allows for a clear articulation the pathways to change² within the MenEngage Alliance Theory of Change. That is, outlining the ways in which key interventions result in achieving outputs, which contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Alliance and ultimately to realizing the intended impact of the Alliance, is a central part of the narrative accompanying the Theory of Change and these pathways should be communicated in an accessible manner. This would support an understanding of how the strengthening of the network and its partnerships results in the Alliance's longer-term outcomes (such as policy change and effective programming) and how this contribute to the intended impact of the Alliance (ending of patriarchy and gender justice).

- The Theory of Change should be coupled with a **clear learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME) framework** with clear indicators of success. It is recommended that these indicators should be limited in number and that the framework should flag the indicators that can be monitored internally, by the structures of the network at each level; this should take into account the capacity at these levels to undertake monitoring and the need to support on-going learning. In addition to these indicators, the framework should also highlight which of the indicators will only be evaluated on an annual (or even at the mid-term) basis using the monitoring data as well as additional evaluative activities. This monitoring and evaluation work will allow for a learning process that supports a deeper understanding of whether the anticipated pathways to change 'hold up' and that enables members to adopt reflective practices that allow for adjustments to be made (in terms of assumptions, actions and even the focusing of outcomes) based on this learning.
- We would suggest that for the LME system to be utilized there is a need to **take the nature of the network into account**. The methods employed should be easy to complete (especially given the volunteer nature of the network), and should encourage participation as well as the horizontal sharing of experiences and learning in ways that support the development of a strong learning culture (rather than a focus on compliance and/or formal reporting). Some possible approaches that could be explored within this LME system include:
 - Creating a **template with the key domains of change** (based on the results framework) which networks at all levels can use to: note changes that have taken place in these domains as they happen, indicate when the change took place, who was involved, what role MenEngage played in this change and why the change is significant. This should only be very brief so that people can complete this template, ideally electronically.
 - These templates can be used to support the **Harvesting of Outcomes** at the different levels: this harvesting may take place on a quarterly basis and decisions will need to be taken with respect to responsibilities for both the analysis of the data as well as to sharing the learning being generated through this process. This process will capture different kinds of changes at different levels of the organization. For example, if discourse, policy and programme changes realized at a global level were systematically captured (as has already been started) and were then shared with members in an accessible way, and these domains of change were also systematically captured at a regional and national level, it would be possible for the network to track whether and how the global changes are given expression at regional and national levels. This mapping process would allow for a deeper understanding of the ways in which members and partners are able to refer to global resolutions/commitments and advocate for similar changes in other spaces and the extent to which this contributes to changes in discourse/policy and programming at other levels. Additional evaluative work could then utilize this data to understand the factors that enable changes to take place as well as to explore what else may be required to enhance the efficacy of this work.
 - We would also recommend that, based on the results frame and indicators, the **survey** that was administered as part of this evaluation be streamlined (though ideally maintaining key questions) and utilized at the mid-term such that it is possible to understand change against the baseline established in this evaluation.

² Pathways to change refers to the different ways that we expect change to take place (and associated assumptions)

- These surveys could also continue to use **story stems** in order to understand changes in discourse within the network. This story stem approach could also be built into community of practice sessions run by the network as a way of supporting reflective practice and understanding of change.

All of these methods assume that **LME is prioritized within the network** and that the approach to LME is guided by the imperative of building participation and voice into the learning process as well as the need to ensure that the data that is collected is analyzed and shared, in different ways, with regional and country members in a manner that supports improved planning, the strengthening of the networks as well as learning and accountability. There are excellent examples within the network of how, globally and within regions, communities of practice that support learning from the experiences of both individual and organizational members are being encouraged. Ways to strengthen these initiatives at the different levels of the network are critical to the willingness of members to document change and participate in LME activities in an on-going way.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, as noted above, this evaluation has taken place during a time of change. There is a need for the Alliance to strengthen the inter-sectional nature of its response, particularly given the increased levels of poverty related to COVID-19 and a number of other disasters driven by climate change. There are also rising levels of backlash, and in this context, there is an important role for MenEngage to provide a strong, progressive and feminist male voice and image. Finally, there is the work of combatting the voices of racism as well as other harmful discourses. This evaluation has highlighted the significant progress that has been made against the results frame (2017-2020). The network has been strengthened, partnerships developed, and changes made in terms of discourse, policy and programs. It will be vital that in this next phase these changes are consolidated across regions and in countries and then amplified such that the Alliance can effectively contribute towards its goal of gender justice.